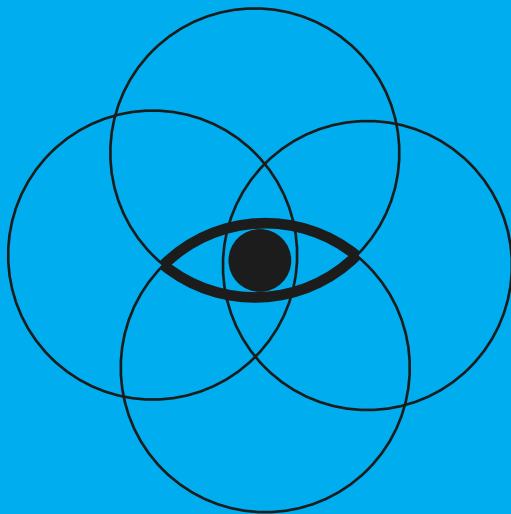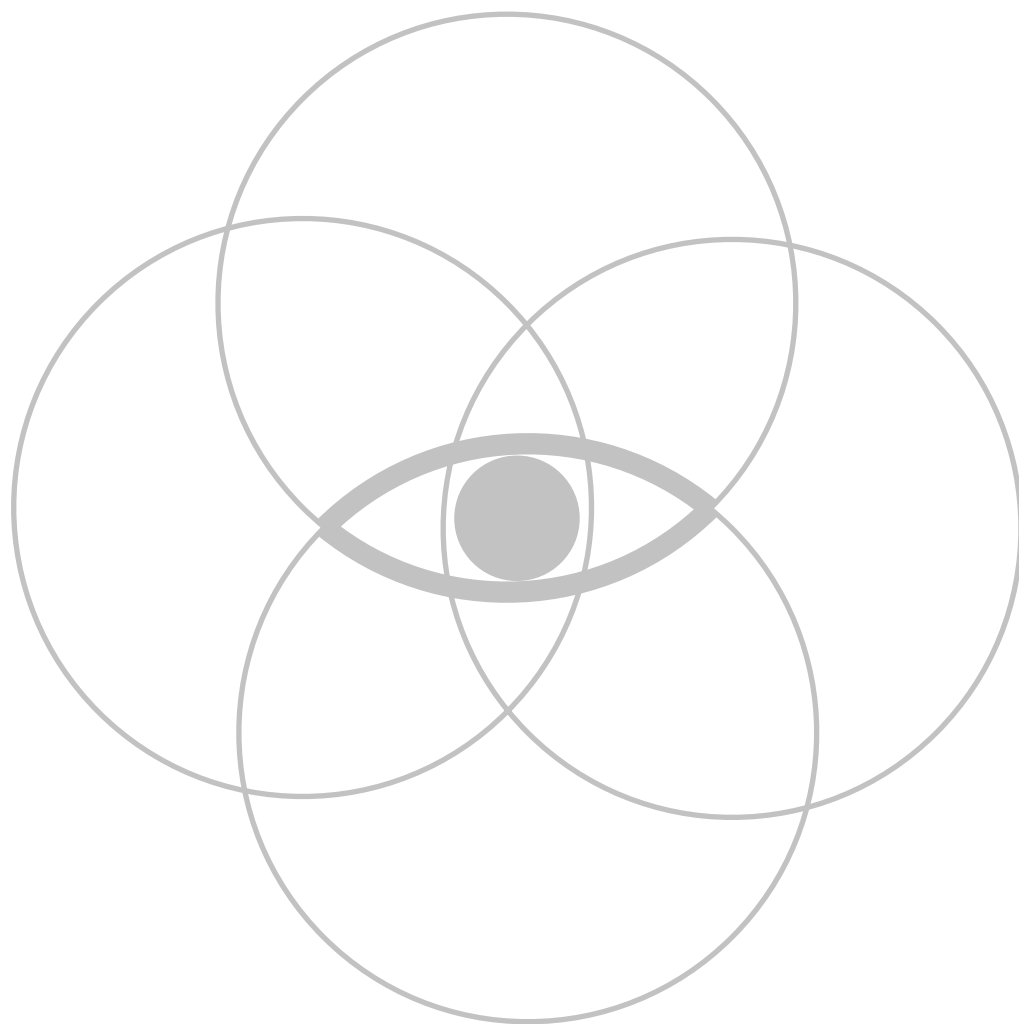# Mirroring

Governing is growing

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This tool has been developed in the framework of the H2020 project Generative Commons Living Lab as part of the Governace Toolkit by Verena Lenna for the Community Land Trust Brussels.

Introduction

Governance is not only about regulating the decisional processes. It is the totality of activities and systems that govern a given set of resources. As such, governance is a process of continuous negotiation between the available capacities and the mission to be accomplished. Necessarily governance is continuously evolving, responding to changing conditions and the changing identity of the concerned actors and organisations. This means that it is not possible to design a specific governance system without revising and taking into account, on the one hand, the conditions within which such a system is supposed to operate; on the other hand, without having a long term vision to focus on for the growth of the organisation.

Working as a mirror, Mirroring is a tool allowing collectives to take the time to look in their own eyes and reflect on their values, capacities and purposes as a starting point for designing an effective and sustainable development strategy and the required system of governance. The process consists of four steps: the envisioning of a desirable future for the collective in the short, medium and long run; the assessment of the capacities required to realise such a future; the design of an actionable plan making possible the achievement of the desired goals; the identification of an accountability system giving the possibility to check on the actual progress and results of the devised strategy. The reinterpretation of coaching techniques provided the fundamental elements to structure the process with minimal features, allowing organisations and collectives to adapt it to their specific characteristics and needs. The visual support provided allows organising the process while preserving the notes and reflections for the forthcoming sessions.

IMAGINE

Your Vision....what do you want to become?

creative communing.
community art
alternative structure

Purpose

Conditions

Values

more...

professionalisation

institutionalisation

alternative status   partnership

ASSESS

Today

...your future, your vision

legal framework

governance and internal organisation

human resources

Coherence with your purpose/mission

Internal communication

funding and finances

Relationship with PA

Balance formality/informality

space and material conditions

External communication

relationship with rest of the city/ neighbourhood

PLAN

what next?

Governance decision making system

Communication

legal framework

governance internal organisation and communication

human resources

Relationship with PA

Coherence with your purpose/mission

funding and finances

Balance formality/informality

PROGRESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

| 07/2021 | 09-10/2021 | 11/2021 | 12/2021 | 01/2022 | 06/2022 | 12/2022 | 12/2023 |

Accountability System

Screenshots of a Mirroring process, showing the digital platform used to visually support the conversation during multiple sessions.

How to use these instructions

As a coaching process, Mirroring requires an external facilitator or anybody willing to play the role of a coach. For the effectiveness of the process, as better explained in the forthcoming paragraph, it is warmly advised to involve somebody having very little knowledge of the collective or initiative deciding to undergo the Mirroring process. The following instructions address the coach or facilitator to support them in preparing the Mirroring sessions and performing their role. They describe what should happen during each phase and provide suggestions for meaningful information to emerge.

What is coaching?

Coaching is not counselling, as it does not imply psychological work or therapy or dealing with an organisation's past in the attempt of correcting present attitudes, although some interesting elements could indeed emerge from previous experiences. While learning from the past, the gaze is future-oriented and the ultimate purpose is preparing for forthcoming objectives and achievements. Coaching is not teaching or training, as both imply the transmission of predefined contents and knowledge to somebody learning. Coaching is based on the assumption that the person or organisation being coached has the answer and the capacity to address their challenges and issues. The coach is somebody who, by asking the right questions, allows an organisation to create a different perspective, to become aware of their potential and to take action towards the desired goals. The coach, therefore, does not need to be an expert in the field of the coachee. Furthermore, a person external to the organisation who knows very little about its functioning will require some explanations and clarifications that somebody involved in the organisation would

not ask, possibly leaving some unspoken aspects or taking things for granted. And while explaining how the organisation works may be perceived by the participants as a repetitive thing to do, in some cases, it can reveal different points of view to be taken into account during any phase of the process.

Below you can find some general suggestions to lead the process fruitfully, which means: allowing insightful information to emerge and new points of view and perspectives to be established, possibly allowing to unlock different approaches and capacities.

Use of the visuals

The graphic materials provided are those used to implement the tool, testing the Mirroring process with two different collectives and in the digital environment. They can be downloaded from the gE.CO webpage and printed to facilitate the process and help organise the topics and suggestions emerging during the discussion. As illustrated on page 6, you will need one hectagon for phases one and three, and two hectagons for phase two. You can choose the visual that better suits your purposes for the final phase, depending on the accountability system you will set up with the participants. You can print them big enough to allow people to sit all around or to hang them on a wall so that everybody can visualise the topics and ideas being discussed. Alternatively, you can also use a digital environment if an in-person meeting is not possible. Have a look at gE. CO's Digital tools to choose the most appropriate digital setting.

Duration

There is no predetermined duration for the Mirroring process. Depending on the conversation's pace and depth, you may decide to break the cycle into two or more sessions. This process is meant to support collectives and organisations in reflecting on who they are, their growth and how to sustain it: the appropriate amount of time should be dedicated based on the participants' needs.

Phase One: Imagine

The first phase of the process is conceived to allow a given organisation to clarify, share and align on their values and purposes. This should allow them to identify short term, medium-term and long term objectives while considering their potential and evaluating the challenges related to the context within which they operate.
Questions to ask may be the following, but not limited to:
Where do you see yourself in one year, two years or five years?
How could your context change?
What would be favourable and unfavourable conditions for your growth?
Which would you say are your driving values, the values driving what you do?

Hints for coaching:
- Be engaged and curious while you are listening.
- Ask participants to make examples to clarify their statements or better explain their evaluations, especially when different opinions emerge about the same aspect. Do they have a specific situation in mind? Are they referring to a particular episode? This may help all involved participants clarify their views and any divergent opinion.
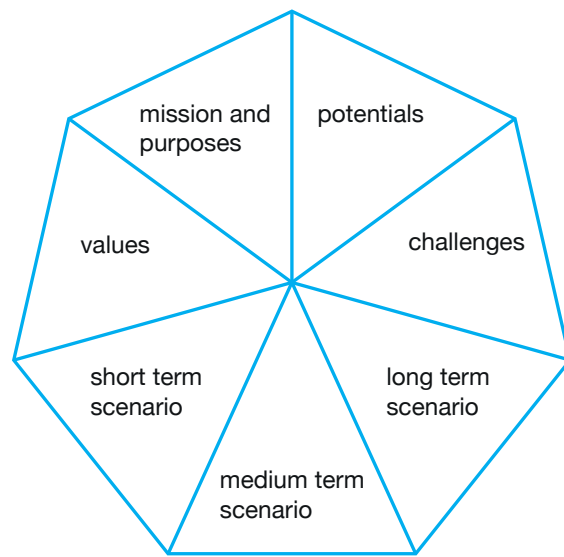
Values, conditions and scenarios to be explored during the Imagine phase of Mirroring.
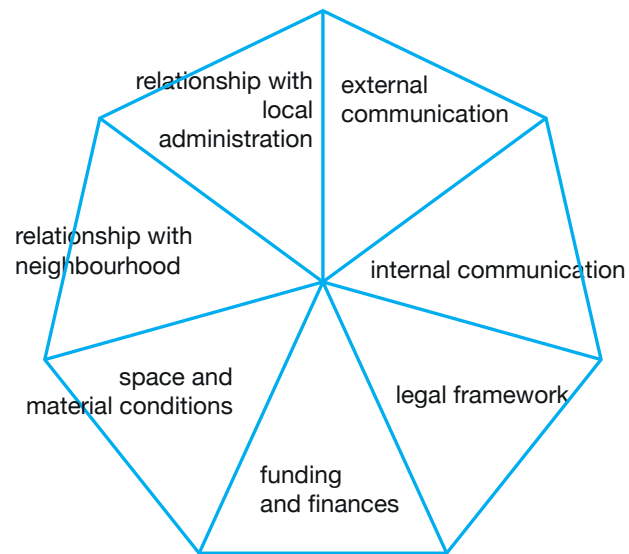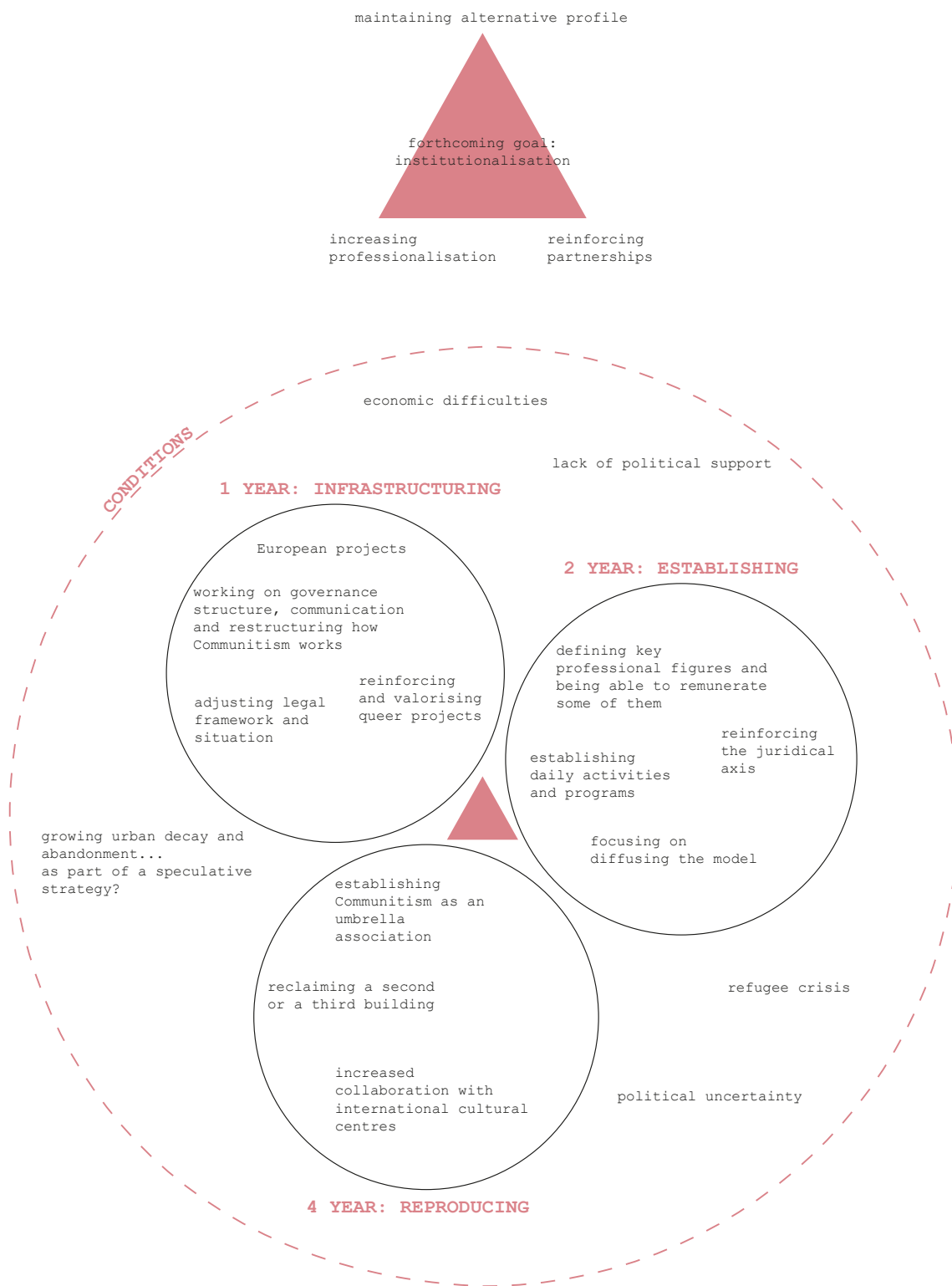

Capacities and realms of activities to be discussed during the Assessment phase of Mirroring.

- Silence is often the most effective way to invite participants to contribute and think deeper. Do not rush the conversation, allow participants to take the time to express their thoughts. If answers seem too shallow, you can ask other questions to allow further explanations to emerge.

Phase Two: Assess

In phase two, you will invite the participants to select the capacities and activities that are most relevant for their organisation and to assess them. Amongst a wide range of possibilities, you can propose: internal organisation, funding and finances, space and material conditions, relationship with the rest of the city/neighbourhood, relationship with the public administration, legal framework, human resources, internal communication, external communication, coherence with your purpose and mission, the balance of formality and informality. These are only suggestions: invite the participants to be original and suggest the functions and aspects that matter the most for their metabolism. Assign each capacity to a sector of the hectagon and ask the participants to assess their organisation's performance. How is their internal communication? What about their funding capacity? Ask them to evaluate their performance with a score from 1 to 10. This will be important to measure progress during the fourth phase of the process.

After all aspects will be discussed and evaluated, the participants will have to forecast their organisation's performance in the future: how will internal communication look like to be coherent while sustaining the realisation of the objectives identified in Phase One? What funding system will be in place to maintain a critical organisational effort? How will the legal structure evolve? What will have to change to bring the quality of the relationship with the neighbourhood from a 5 to a 9? While this may

maintaining alternative profile

forthcoming goal:
institutionalisation

increasing
professionalisation

reinforcing
partnerships

economic difficulties

lack of political support

CONDITIONS

1 YEAR: INFRASTRUCTURING

European projects

working on governance
structure, communication
and restructuring how
Communitism works

2 YEAR: ESTABLISHING

reinforcing
and valorising
queer projects

defining key
professional figures and
being able to remunerate
some of them

adjusting legal
framework and
situation

reinforcing
the juridical
axis

establishing
daily activities
and programs

growing urban decay and
abandonment...
as part of a speculative
strategy?

focusing on
diffusing the model

establishing
Communitism as an
umbrella
association

reclaiming a second
or a third building

refugee crisis

increased
collaboration with
international cultural
centres

political uncertainty

4 YEAR: REPRODUCING

A diagram of the results of the envisioning process with the Athens based collective Communitism.

sound like a wishful thinking exercise, it may invite participants to imagine the conditions for realising their plans more concretely and pragmatically. In Phase One, they envisioned their goals and objectives finally being achieved. In this phase, they are invited to think about the conditions that make those achievements possible. This will be a crucial step to prepare for the action plan that participants will design in Phase Three. Also in this case, for each capacity or activity, the assessment of the future performance will be expressed by a score, allowing the organisation to measure the distance and the progress from the existing to the ideal situation.

Hints for coaching

- As a result of participants trying to assess their organizational capacity in detail, notice how relations of cause and effects become apparent. Point them out and/or ask the participants to confirm them: "Would you say your limited financial capacity has an impact on human resources?"
- Recall any aspect mentioned in a previous moment of the conversation to highlight the consistency of the process and help the participants draw relevant connections.
- Question the answers of the participants and their perception of facts and situations, as this may reveal different perspectives. Ask why: "Why would you say the internal communication is not effective? Based on what?"

Phase Three: Plan

Based on what emerged during the previous sessions, the participants will have a clearer vision of their future objectives and how their capacities and organisation should transform to realise those objectives. Phase Three is about defining long-term strategies to develop those capacities. A specific plan will be designed for each aspect and activity discussed in the previous phase, starting with actions taken immediately by collectives. This is necessary to maintain the momentum of the Mirroring process and valorise its analysis and results.

Hints for coaching
Ask participants to be as specific and concrete as possible in designing their plans. The more concrete they are, the higher the chances to translate them into actual actions.
Ask what, when and who: what will be the first step? When are you going to take action? Who is going to take responsibility?
Identify the people that will have to take the responsibility to realise a given plan or a part of it. Do not confuse those having the responsibility and those being accountable for a particular result. The latter will ensure that progress is made, but the actions and advancements will be in the hands of those identified as responsible.

Phase Four: Progress and Accountability

This phase is about establishing an accountability system: how will it be possible to monitor and measure progress? How to make sure the actions identified in Phase Three will be taken? The accountability system will be designed based on the specific possibilities of the organisation: amongst many options, a person may be designated to monitor progress; a timeline may be drawn and hung on a wall for constant verification; a regular topic in the schedule of forthcoming meetings may be dedicated to assessing advancements and blockages. And so forth.

Hints for coaching
- Make sure that the accountability system the participants define is reliable.
- As a facilitator and coach of Mirroring, you may suggest setting up a check-up session to help the organisation identify possible blockages or redefine its objectives in the framework of different conditions. This may be in a relatively long time to allow the organisation to make some relevant progress.